

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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FM AMCONSUL QUEBEC
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 924
INFO AMEMBASSY OTTAWA
AMCONSUL MONTREAL
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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, CA
SUBJECT: QUEBEC CITY MAYOR TO BE LIBERAL CANDIDATE

1. QUEBEC CITY MAYOR GILLES LAMONTAGNE CONFIRMED MARCH 9 RECENT RUMORS THAT HE WOULD SEEK THE LIBERAL CANDIDACY IN THE FEDERAL BY ELECTION FOR THE RIDING OF LANGEIER. MAYOR WILL BE COMPETING FOR SEAT LEFT VACANT BY JEAN MARCHAND AT TIME OF HIS UNSUCCESSFUL CANDIDACY FOR PROVINCIAL LEGISLATURE. CHOOSING DELIBERATELY TO DEFEND CANADIAN UNITY, LAMONTAGNE DECLARED THAT HE SAW IN LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA BEST GUARANTEE FOR A STRONG CENTRAL GOVERNMENT CAPABLE OF UNIFYING PEOPLE WHO BELIEVE IN CANADA. HE SAID THAT HE WAS NOT OVERLY SURPRISED PQ VICTORY BUT THAT HE BELIEVED IN A UNITED CANADA WITH A FEDERAL GOVERNMENT WHICH WAS OPEN TO NEW CONCEPTS. HIS WISH IS NOT TO DESTROY THE QUEBEC GOVERNMENT BUT "TO CONVINCE IT OF THE ERRORS OF ITS WAYS."

2. AS WE HAVE REPORTED BEFORE, MAYOR LAMONTAGNE HAS OFTEN BEEN RUMORED READY TO GO TO OTTAWA AND BE NAMED TO A CABINET POST IMMEDIATELY. ON MARCH 9, HE DENIED PM HAD PROMISED HIM A CABINET
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POST AND NOTED THAT HE WOULD HAVE TO GET ACCUSTOMED TO NOT BEING CHIEF.
LAMONTAGNE IS A FORMER BUSINESSMAN WHO HAS SERVED 3 TERMS AS MAYOR. HE IS GENERALLY CREDITED FOR MUCH OF QUEBEC CITY'S ECONOMIC PROGRESS IN RECENT YEARS EXCEPT AMONG MILIEU WHICH DOES NOT CONSIDER CONCRETE AND SKYSCRAPERS TO BE PROGRESS.

3. COMMENT: GILLES LAMONTAGNE'S CANDIDACY REPRESENTS VERY IMPORTANT ACQUISITION FOR LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA. WELL-KNOWN THROUGHOUT THIS AREA, HE STILL ENJOYS CONFIDENCE OF MAJORITY OF QUEBEC CITIZENS EVEN IF HIS IMAGE IS PALING A BIT. (IN THAT RESPECT, HIS DEPARTURE IS ALSO GOOD FOR LOCAL-LEVEL CIVIC PROGRESS PARTY WHICH NEEDS REJUVENATING). IF ELECTED, LAMONTAGNE COULD BE FEDERAL-LEVEL LIBERAL LEADER FOR QUEBEC CITY REGION AND ALSO HAVE LARGE INFLUENCE ON PROVINCE-LEVEL REGIONAL LIBERAL LEADERS. IF CHOSEN FOR A CABINET POST AS WELL, DESPITE DENIALS OF A DEAL, HE COULD PLAY FEDERAL LEADERSHIP ROLE FOR MUCH OF EASTERN QUEBEC. LAMONTAGNE'S MOVE IS SIGNIFICANT BECAUSE IT IS NOT EASY RIGHT NOW TO GET AN UNCOMMITTED POLITICIAN TO COMMIT HIMSELF AS STRONGLY ON CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUE AS LAMONTAGNE DID. HE MADE IT CLEAR IT WAS PQ VICTORY WHICH PROPELLED HIM FINALLY TO ACCEPT LIBERAL OFFERS. NONETHELESS, HE HOPES TO CAMPAIGN ON LOCAL ISSUES AND DOES NOT SEE BYELECTIONS AS MINI-REFERENDUM ON CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUES. HE SHOULD BE A CONSIDERABLE AID TO LIBERALS WHO ARE STILL SAILING IN MURKY WATERS HERE DESPITE GOOD NEWS OF LATEST GALLOP POLL. MAYOR HAD COURAGE CHOOSE RUN IN UNPREDICTABLE LANGEЛИER RIDING RATHER THAN NEIGHBORING LIBERAL STRONGHOLD LOUIS-HEBERT. HE WILL BE DIFFICULT TO BEAT AND SHOULD AID THE EVENTUAL LIBERAL CANDIDATE (4 ARE CONTESTING FOR NOMINATION) IN LOUIS-HEBERT AS WELL.
GARLAND

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